

CIVILIAN SPOTLIGHT

Depot Post Office’s most experienced employee retires

CPL. JENNIFER BROFER
STAFF WRITER

In 1968, at age 18, he began his career with the U.S. Postal Service as a casual, working a \$5-an-hour job in order to put himself through technical college. Fifteen years later, he became the Depot Post Office’s lead sales and services associate, the same job he has held for the past 20 years.

Today, 53-year-old Herbert Burnes Jr., the Depot Post Office’s most experienced employee, retired after more than 31 years of federal service.

Burnes, who served in the Army from 1971 - 1972, has worked his way from the ground up to be where he is today.

After his enlistment in the Army, he worked various jobs as a janitor and then as a distribution clerk for the Beaufort Post Office. Beginning in 1976, he drove the mail truck, picking up and boxing mail from Parris Island and the Air Station. In 1983, he became the Depot Post Office’s window clerk, where he has been ever since – wearing a blue pin-striped shirt, blue tie with clasp and trousers to work everyday.

Burnes said the reason he continued working for the post



Herbert Burnes Jr., lead sales and services associate for the Depot Post Office, speaks with one of his many customers Oct. 22. Burns, a native of Beaufort, retired today after more than 31 years of federal service.

office after college was because “in the days of old, this was one of the better-paying jobs in the Beaufort area.”

He has stayed at the post office so long, not just because he is his own boss, but because he loves interacting with different kinds of people everyday, he said.

“I just love people,” said Burnes, who was born and raised

in Beaufort. “Now, I’m talking about people from all walks of life, you know – every nationality. I’m just a people person. I love my customers ... they kind of brighten up my day.”

Throughout his years, Burnes has handled millions of pieces of mail and served hundreds of customers, from permanent personnel to recruits. One of his

most memorable customers, however, was his own son, Herbert Burnes III, who went through recruit training aboard Parris Island in 2000.

“I stayed around long enough to see my son go through recruit training ... that was a thrill and a pleasure,” said the husband and father of two. “He was so close to home and couldn’t call.

I would see him as I was going home from work. He was with 2nd Bn., and I had to drive right past him. Then I’d see him on the parade deck sometimes. He was even the guide for a while ... it was really a thrill.”

Burnes, who has been described as a “colorful character” by his coworkers, has made a positive impression on those he works with, as well as his customers, one of whom described him as a “mild-mannered people person.”

“He enjoys people ... he’s a quiet spirit, meaning he’s a good listener,” said Sam Spain, assistant manager for the Parris Island Armed Services Bank, who has known Burnes for more than 20 years. “He has a positive influence because he has great wisdom ... he’s a delightful and joyful Christian man. Anybody who says anything else I would have to refute.”

Standing at 5 feet 5 inches tall and weighing only 138 pounds, Burns has proven that you do not have to be a big man to have a big heart.

“He’s a helper to all regardless of the situation or circumstances,” said Spain. “He jumps right in there to be a blessing to those who need him.”

Aside from his postal duties,

Burnes takes an active role in his church as the chairman of the deacons. Through all the good times and bad, he said he continues to find strength through his faith.

“I’ve been a God-fearing man for a long time,” Burnes emphasized. “When times get rough, that’s where I look – I look to Jesus Christ.”

Having made many happy memories working for the post office, Burnes said he looks forward to making more by fishing, shrimping and making time for his favorite hobby when he retires.

“My plan and intention is to venture into the construction industry,” he said. “I love construction work.”

With 31 years, 11 months and two days federal service behind him, Burnes stamped his last package, sold his last book of stamps, greeted his last customer and closed his window for the last time, saying goodbye to the post office for good.

When asked what he will miss the most, he said without the slightest hesitation, “I am going to miss the people – my customers and my coworkers – very much. It has been a joy to work for the U.S. Postal Service.”

From formation to congregation – man serves Corps for 41 years

CPL. THOMAS PERRY
STAFF WRITER

Johnny Hannah began his 41-year Marine Corps journey Nov. 21, 1961. At the time, the Miami native was a self-described “wild child,” who gave little thought to the future.

“I used to tell my wife Elizabeth that I would have left me many a times during my wild Marine Corps days,” said Hannah, about his wife of 36 years. “I wouldn’t have put up with my foolishness.”

His foolishness, much like his Marine Corps career, ended a long time ago. Hannah is now a minister at the New Road Baptist Church in Ridgeland. His faith and his wife’s love have carried him through the peaks and valleys of life providing a pinnacle of success for both his career and his church.

Today, after 20 years of active duty and 21 years as a civilian employee, his honorable jour-

ney will run its course.

When Hannah first enlisted in the Marine Corps, he was an infantryman, but his career as a grunt did not last long.

“I decided real fast, ‘Oh no, this is not the way to go,’” he remembered with a smile.

His training as an infantryman did not go to waste. In 1965, Hannah was sent to Vietnam as a supply Marine.

“It worked out pretty well,” he said.

Hannah said that he enjoyed his time in the Corps and that everything he learned in the Marine Corps prepared him for the future.

“Now that it’s all said and done, and I look back over it ... I had a ball,” said Hannah, who retired from active duty in 1982 as a master sergeant. “When I retired, I took a few weeks off so I could relax. Not too long, though -- that can get contagious.”

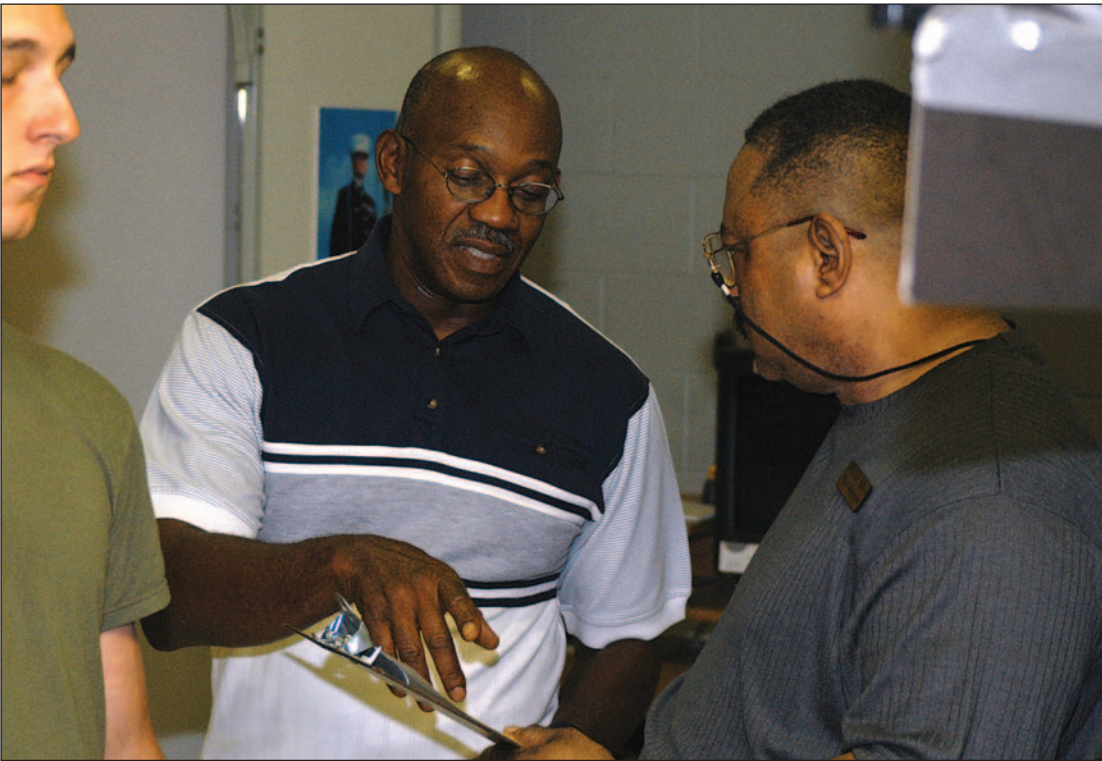
Relaxation was the disease, and the year he spent after retirement as a Beaufort County correctional officer was supposed to be the cure. But he was not happy. Something was missing.

His relief came when he was hired by Depot Clothing in 1983. He was reunited with his Corps family after a brief hiatus.

Hannah said his transition to civilian service went smoothly and that he has always felt that he has received the utmost respect from the Marines that he has worked with.

“It was just a matter a taking off the uniform,” said Hannah, who retires today as a supply technician at Depot Clothing. “It has been pretty much the same. Marine or civilian, mission has always come first.”

Hannah now has a new mission in his life, which began in 1999 when he was ordained a minister.



Johnny Hannah retired today after 41 years of Marine Corps service. He spent 21 years on active duty and 20 years as a civilian employee on the Depot. Hannah was ordained a minister in 1999 and said he plans to commit his entire life to ‘doing the Lord’s work.’

“It’s time for me to move on and go to work full time for the Lord,” said Hannah. “Being a minister is my love. It has always been my love. It just took me a little while to realize it.”

He is ready to begin the third phase in his life of service, but those he serves with are not quite ready to see him go.

“He has been a great advisor and supporter,” said Gunner

Sgt. Rodney Michael, Staff NCOIC at Phase II Clothing, who has known Hannah since 1999. “He is a joy to work with. He is going to truly be missed around here.”